



# Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ August 2016

## ★ From the Director

What a great Veteran's Day at the Illinois State Fair! Great turnout, wonderful weather and a great time remembering and celebrating you, our Veteran. Hundreds of Veterans and their families joined us this past Sunday. Our new Kids Corner and JROTC Drill Competition were appreciated and well attended. Governor Rauner and I were able to present the Vietnam Veteran Commemorative pins to all the Vietnam Veterans attending the program. We completed the day with a wonderful veteran's Day Parade!



*(left clockwise) Director Jeffries helps to cut the ribbon, along with the Governor and Lt. Governor for the First day of the Illinois State Fair.*

*Governor Rauner presenting a rose to one of the Gold Star families. Each family present received a rose that they could lay at the Battlefield Cross.*

*Large audience for the Gold Star Memorial Service at the Illinois State Fair. Taps was played the Bugler of the 144th Army Band at the conclusion of the Memorial Service.*



Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to “Stand Up and Be Counted!” by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you're helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. [Click here to register.](#)

**We Thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to You.**



## ★ Serving Those Who Served

An Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs program

# SERVING ★ THOSE WHO ★ SERVED

This past Sunday we announced our program, Serving Those Who Served. A program that we hope will make Veteran's Day 11-11-16 the largest Volunteer event for a Veteran day in the State! Volunteers will have multiple projects to choose from around the State of Illinois. Each project will require a few hours of your time. Click here to register your organization (and project) or to volunteer for a project - <http://www.illinois.gov/veterans/pages/serving-those-who-served.aspx>



*Director Jeffries and Governor Rauner view the Memorial Wall presented by the Patriot Guard.*

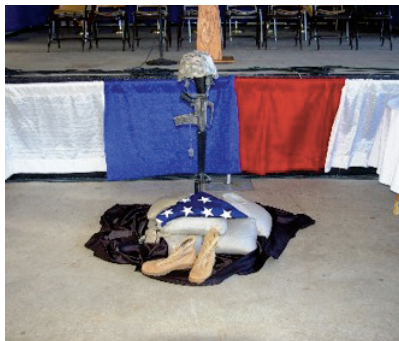
## ★ Raised garden beds in Manteno



The Illinois Veterans Home at Manteno is making sure there is one more significant way the members can grow. The home installed three large raised garden beds to make gardening more accessible to members. "It's a way to enhance the lives of those who live here," said Lester Robertson, director of the veterans home. "The veterans believe it could make a more home-like atmosphere."

The project was made possible with money provided through the members benefit fund. Master gardener Lyn Nitz-Mercaeant, a graduate of the horticulture program at Kankakee Community College, is the facilitator. Several veterans assisted with the planting and had a great time with this recent ongoing project.

# ★ Veterans Day at the Illinois State Fair



Hundreds of veterans, military personnel, their families and Gold Star Families joined us for a great day at the Illinois State Fair – with special honors for our Vietnam Veterans. Mother Nature cooperated with great weather as we remembered and celebrated our veterans and service-members during our Veteran's Day at the Fair. Governor Rauner was with us the majority of the day, participating in our events and meeting and thanking our Veterans.

Director Jeffries, along with Governor Rauner led an impressive Memorial Service for the Gold Star Families Sunday morning.



*Governor Rauner signs the Gold Star Family bill declaring the day after Gold Star Mother's Day to be named Gold Star Family Day.*



*Governor Rauner presents the proclamation declaring Mike Putnam as the IDVA Employee of the Year for 2016.*



*Director Jeffries welcomes the audience to Veteran's Day at the Illinois State Fair.*



*Director Jeffries, Dr. Ann Rondeau and Governor Rauner pause after receiving a proclamation for Veteran's Day at the Illinois State Fair.*

Later in the day our Official Program offered a wonderful message from Dr. Ann Rondeau, President of the College of DuPage and US Navy Vice Admiral (Ret). Governor Rauner and Director Jeffries also honored Songs4Soldiers with a Veteran Business Appreciation Award and Mr. Joseph Schaler as the 2016 Veteran of the year. Governor Rauner and Director Jeffries also awarded Mr. Michael Putnam as the 2016 Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs Employee of the Year!



# ★ Veterans Day at the Illinois State Fair

**Songs4Soldiers** mission is to enrich the lives of combat veterans and their families who have limited resources. They honor their service through effective assistance in everyday situations. Since Mr. Dustin Row first founded the organization in May 2013, they have assisted over 85 veterans with needs totaling over \$146,000. Mr. Row is a combat veteran of the Iraq War, serving in the 724th Transportation Unit.

**Joseph Schaler**, a Marine Combat Veteran, served his country in Vietnam. Once back home he has spent endless hours working to create and improve programs to assist his fellow veterans. He worked with the Logan County Board to recognize and fund a Veterans Assistance Commission for Logan County. He also created a Burial Assistance Commission and was instrumental in Logan County becoming an Official Purple Heart Community.

**Mike Putnam** is active in the Illinois Air National Guard and has the attitude, operational and technical knowledge second to none at IDVA. Mike continually goes beyond his call of duty to do what is needed, travel where he must and work as long as required to get the job done, most of which goes unnoticed. His attendance, cooperativeness and adaptability are all exemplary. Mike was responsible for installation, configuration and testing of our new network infrastructure required to implement our new cloud-based EHR and Point Click Care. This included a fairly new technology that had never been utilized. Mike spent weeks configuring our equipment for the fail-over process to work correctly. Mike lives in Hillsboro, Illinois with wife Kyle, son Gage and daughter Cammie.



*Governor Rauner and Director Jeffries present a proclamation to Songs4Soldier founder Dustin Row. His organization was named the IDVA 2016 Veteran Business Partner of the Year.*



*Governor Rauner and Director Jeffries present a proclamation to Mr. Joseph Schaler as the 2016 Veteran Volunteer of the year.*



*Assistant Harry Sawyer was the emcee for the both programs*

*Director Jeffries with all the JROTC drill teams who competed this year.*



## ★ IDVA Calendar

**8/28 Veterans Day** – DuQuoin State Fair

**9/05 Labor Day** – Offices Closed

**9/17 Maple Hill Cemetery** – Dedication

**9/25 Gold Star Mother Luncheon** – Springfield, Illinois

**9/29 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans 50th Anniversary Commemoration** – Brookfield Zoo-Chicago

## ★ New Employees

**Harold Wilson** joined IDVA as the Chief Fiscal Officer on August 1. He returns to this agency after a 16 year absence. Harold served this agency as a VA work study student starting in 1991, then later was the Veterans' Service Officer for Macon County in Decatur from 1994-1999. During his 24 year career with the state of Illinois he has worked for IDES, IDVA, IDOC and comes to us from the Illinois Department of Military Affairs. Harold is a U.S. Navy veteran. During his military service his duty assignments included the USS Enterprise (CVN-65) and the Fleet Marine Force. Harold has a daughter, Emma and they both reside in Kincaid, Illinois.

## ★ Did you know...

### STUDENT VETERAN CAREER SUMMIT

#### ARE YOU READY TO JUMPSTART YOUR CAREER SEARCH?

This free summit will provide you with the skills needed to energize your career, such as:

- The Science of the Resume
- Maximizing Social Media in Your Job Search
- Building Relationships - The Key to Career Success
- and much more!

at  
DePaul Center  
1 East Jackson Blvd,  
Chicago

Starts:  
FRIDAY  
OCTOBER 7<sup>th</sup>  
3:00 P.M.

Ends:  
SATURDAY  
OCTOBER 8<sup>th</sup>  
4:30 P.M.

at  
DePaul Center  
1 East Jackson Blvd,  
Chicago

We have a limited number of hotel rooms available free of charge for participants who live outside of the greater Chicagoland area (hour and a half commute or greater). We will also provide a stipend to cover your mileage and parking costs for the drive to Chicago.

Register now at: <http://careersummit.eventbrite.com>

Every day, Monday through Friday, our Veteran Service Officers see an estimated 370 veterans a day, assisting veterans in navigating the complex web of services and benefits available, IDVA runs 46 full-time and 35 part-time (itinerant) offices in 80 out of the 102 counties. These offices are staffed by more than 60 individual Veteran Service Officers (VSO's), fellow veterans who are experts on federal, state and local veteran resources.

Our VSO's are trained and accredited by the US Department of Veterans Affairs to provide free assistance to veterans and their dependents and survivors.

To find the closest VSO to you click here -

<http://www.illinois.gov/veterans/benefits/Pages/benefits-assistance.aspx> or call 1-800-437-9824.



State of Illinois  
Department of Veterans' Affairs



Illinois Department of  
**Veterans' Affairs**